



Readiness Assessment for Literacy Program Implementation: A Case Study of Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the readiness of elementary schools in Palopo City, Indonesia, for implementing literacy programs under the Merdeka Curriculum framework. Using a mixed-methods approach and the Countenance Stake evaluation model, the study assesses key antecedents, including school policies, infrastructure, and instructional strategies. Data were collected from nine selected schools through observations, interviews, surveys, and document analysis. Findings reveal that while school policies align with national regulations, such as Ministry of Education Regulation No. 56/M/2022, inconsistencies in implementation persist due to resource constraints and uneven Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Infrastructure limitations, including inadequate library facilities, poorly maintained reading corners, and insufficient multimedia resources, hinder literacy-rich environments. Schools employ strategies, such as teacher training, reading programs, and stakeholder collaborations, to address these gaps. However, disparities in access to professional development and unequal resource distribution highlight ongoing challenges. This study underscores the importance of policy standardization, infrastructure enhancement, and targeted capacity-building programs to foster sustainable literacy practices. Strengthening school-community partnerships and increasing government support are crucial for addressing systemic gaps. The findings contribute to the discourse on literacy education in Indonesia, offering practical recommendations for policymakers and educators. Literacy programs can be more effectively implemented by improving school readiness, supporting national educational goals and enhancing student learning outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

Literacy skills are fundamental to education, shaping critical thinking and influencing overall academic success (Arifin, 2024; Mardiana, 2024; Vodã et al., 2022). However, literacy remains a significant challenge for education in Indonesia, as reflected in the results of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) (Hartono et al., 2022; Ismawati et al., 2023; Sholikah & Pertiwi, 2021). In 2018, Indonesia ranked 74th out of 78 countries, scoring 371 in reading, 379 in mathematics, and 396 in science (Ismawati et al., 2023; Kusmaryono & Kusumaningsih, 2023). Despite improving ranking to 68th in 2022, the scores remained stagnant, indicating limited progress in addressing literacy

challenges. These results highlight systemic issues in the education sector and underscore the urgent need for innovative and sustainable literacy programs ([Abulibdeh et al., 2024](#); [Cavalcanti-Bandos et al., 2021](#); [Lo, 2024](#)).

Literacy extends beyond academic outcomes; it holds religious and cultural significance. The Qur'an emphasizes the importance of literacy, as stated in QS. Al-'Alaq: 1–5, where Allah commands humanity to "read" to acquire knowledge and understand the divine message. It underscores literacy's role in enriching intellectual capacities and fostering moral and spiritual growth ([Ahmad Fitriyadi Sari, 2023](#); [Andrei, 2023](#); [Polemikou & Da Silva, 2020](#)). Therefore, improving literacy is a multidimensional goal aligning with educational and religious imperatives in Indonesia ([Amalia et al., 2024](#); [Arifin, 2024](#)).

Recognizing the critical nature of literacy, the Indonesian government has implemented initiatives such as the National Literacy Movement (*Gerakan Literasi Nasional, GLN*) and the School Literacy Movement (*Gerakan Literasi Sekolah, GLS*). These programs aim to cultivate a literacy culture across educational, familial, and societal domains ([Azzajjad et al., 2023](#); [Kartikasari & Nuryasana, 2022](#)). However, challenges persist, including inadequate resources, limited teacher training, and poor program management ([Mumpuni et al., 2021](#); [Nandy Intan Kurnia, 2021](#)). These barriers are evident in Palopo City, where some of the 65 elementary schools implementing the Merdeka Curriculum struggle with literacy program execution, often due to insufficient preparation and infrastructure ([Arfah et al., 2024](#); [Berlian et al., 2022](#); [Wijyaningputri et al., 2024](#)).

The *Merdeka Curriculum*, introduced in 2022, emphasizes project-based learning and literacy as a core competency ([Dewi & Arifin, 2024](#); [Risqi et al., 2023](#); [Wulandari & Nawangsari, 2024](#)). While it provides a flexible framework to address literacy gaps, successful implementation requires comprehensive readiness. It includes robust school policies, adequate resources, and well-structured strategies ([Arifin, 2024](#); [Tajurrahman et al., 2024](#); [Yoto et al., 2024](#)). However, the lack of readiness in many schools hampers the program's effectiveness, as seen in low results from the Minimum Competency Assessment (*Asesmen Kompetensi Minimum, AKM*) ([Hidayah et al., 2025](#); [Wahyuni et al., 2024](#)).

Given these challenges, evaluating schools' readiness to implement literacy programs is essential. Such evaluations provide critical insights into gaps and offer actionable recommendations for improvement. This study focuses on assessing the readiness of elementary schools in Palopo City, particularly regarding policies, resources, and strategies, to ensure the effective implementation of literacy programs within the *Merdeka Curriculum* framework. This research aims to contribute to developing literacy practices that align with national educational goals and local community needs by addressing these issues.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods approach ([Leavy, 2022](#)), combining qualitative and quantitative methods to evaluate the readiness of literacy program implementation in elementary schools. The research adopts the Countenance Stake evaluation model ([Stake, 1967](#)), focusing on the antecedent stage to examine preparatory factors such as school policies, infrastructure, and strategies. This design integrates qualitative components, such as observations and interviews, to explore contextual factors alongside quantitative components, using surveys to measure readiness numerically. By concentrating on the antecedents stage, the study aims to provide detailed insights into the pre-implementation factors influencing the success of literacy programs.

Participants and Sampling

The study was conducted in nine elementary schools across Palopo City, Indonesia, covering major districts such as Sendana, Wara, Wara Utara, Wara Selatan, Wara Timur, Wara Barat, Telluwanua, Mungkajang, and Bara. Schools were selected using cluster random sampling to ensure geographic representation of diverse educational environments. The key participants were school principals, who are crucial in designing, managing, and implementing literacy programs within their institutions.

Data Collection

Multiple data collection techniques were employed to ensure data validity and reliability. Observations were conducted to assess literacy-supportive environments within schools, including the availability and condition of libraries, reading corners, and teaching materials. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with school principals to explore their perspectives on policy implementation, educator preparedness, and program challenges. Surveys were administered to school administrators to assess readiness indicators, particularly in terms of policy compliance, infrastructure availability, and teacher training. Additionally, document analysis was performed to examine relevant school policies, literacy reports, and instructional materials, providing further validation for the data obtained through interviews and observations.

Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data from questionnaires were processed in Microsoft Excel, and results were presented as descriptive statistics, including percentages and charts, to illustrate readiness levels. Qualitative data from interviews, observations, and document analysis were analyzed, comprising data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). Data reduction involved simplifying and categorizing raw data to identify key themes. Data display presented the findings in tables and narrative forms for clarity, while conclusions were drawn by synthesizing and verifying the data to address the research objectives. Triangulation was applied by comparing findings from different data sources and collection methods to enhance data credibility. This robust methodological approach ensures a comprehensive evaluation of the readiness of literacy program implementation in elementary schools in Palopo City.

RESULTS

School Policies in Literacy Program Implementation

School policies are crucial in ensuring the effective implementation of literacy programs in elementary schools across Palopo City. The policies are primarily anchored on the legal framework provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation No. 56/M/2022, which outlines the guidelines for implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in post-pandemic educational recovery efforts. This regulation mandates integrating literacy programs into school activities, emphasizing reading, writing, and numeracy skills. Despite this directive, the implementation varies among schools, with most only applying the curriculum in grades one and four due to resource limitations. As stated by Fitriani, the vice principal of SD Negeri 9 Matekko:

"The literacy program has existed long, even before the Merdeka Curriculum. However, now it is mandatory for all schools, and facilities must also be improved. The focus of the Merdeka Curriculum is indeed on literacy."

The literacy program is further reinforced by the Minimum Competency Assessment (*Asesmen Kompetensi Minimum, AKM*), conducted annually to evaluate students' reading and numeracy skills. Jeni Kendek, the principal of SD Negeri 11 Dangerakko, explained:

"Now we have the AKM, where fifth-grade students take an online test to assess their literacy and numeracy levels. The results are displayed in the education report, showing whether literacy skills are still poor or have improved."

This report provides schools with valuable feedback on their literacy performance, helping them identify areas for improvement. However, many schools, such as SD Negeri 36 Latuppa, still report low literacy scores. As its principal, Jumrany, highlighted:

"Our education report shows that our literacy scores are still low. That's why we've introduced additional programs like Literacy Week, where students and teachers read books together outside the classroom once a week."

In addition to adhering to the legal framework, schools are responsible for developing their own Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to guide the implementation of literacy programs. These SOPs are practical references for planning, executing, and evaluating literacy activities. However, the availability and quality of SOPs differ among schools. While some schools have established comprehensive SOPs, others are still in the draft phase. Jumrany noted:

"Each school develops its SOP according to its needs. Because our literacy scores are low, we've introduced extra programs to improve them."

Similarly, Jeni Kendek added:

"The SOPs originate from the education office, and we adapt them to our school's conditions."

The extent to which these SOPs align with actual practices also varies. For instance, Halima Sadiyah, the treasurer at SD Negeri 29 Songka, shared:

"Yes, the SOP matches what we do. We have activities like 15-minute reading sessions, but it's not just reading—it includes other topics like moral values and national pride, scheduled weekly."

In contrast, Adil, the principal of SD Negeri 37 Mawa, admitted:

"It's not yet optimal."

Infrastructure and Resources for Literacy Programs

Infrastructure and resources play a pivotal role in supporting the successful implementation of literacy programs in elementary schools across Palopo City. The study identified several key components, including libraries, reading corners, school clinics, canteens, and school gardens, as essential for fostering literacy-rich environments. However, the availability and quality of these resources vary significantly between schools.

Libraries are present in all elementary schools, but their conditions differ widely. While some schools, such as SD Negeri 11 Dangerakko, have well-equipped libraries with low tables and mats for students to read comfortably, others, like SD Negeri 8 Salobulo, are still improving their facilities. Unfortunately, the observation data confirms that multimedia tools such as computers and projectors are rarely available in libraries. Jumrany, the principal of SD Negeri 36 Latuppa, noted, "We've received books from the Ministry of Education, but we still lack multimedia tools in the library, which limits the ways students can engage with the materials."

Reading corners are another essential element in every classroom, though their quality varies. Many reading corners are well-maintained, with books neatly arranged on shelves or in baskets. However, some schools, such as SD Negeri 37 Mawa, still need to improve their reading corners, as they are less organized and lack diversity in book collections. Halima Sadiyah, the treasurer at SD Negeri 29 Songka, shared, "We've set up reading corners in each classroom, but we still need more engaging books to attract students." Observations revealed that while all schools provide carpets or mats for reading corners, none have supplementary items like cushions or chairs to enhance comfort, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Facilities in Reading Corners

School Name	Shelves	Baskets	Diverse Books	Mats	Cushions
SD Negeri Dangerakko	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
SD Negeri 37 Mawa	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
SD Negeri 29 Songka	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗

School clinics (UKS) also show disparities in quality and equipment. While all schools have basic first-aid kits and posters promoting health awareness, advanced tools like thermometers and blood pressure monitors are missing in most clinics. Schools such as SD Negeri 27 Lebang and SD Negeri 29 Songka, which collaborate with local health professionals, stand out for their efforts to provide better healthcare facilities. Jumrany explained:

"Our school works with local clinics to ensure we can offer basic medical support for students, even though our UKS equipment is limited."

Canteens are available in all schools, but their management varies. Most schools ensure the food sold is healthy and packaged without plastic, yet they lack literacy-supportive features like books or posters promoting healthy eating. Fitriani, the vice principal of SD Negeri 9 Matekko, mentioned:

"While we have a well-managed canteen, it would be great to incorporate literacy elements like books or educational posters to make it more engaging for students."

School gardens are present in all schools but differ in quality and maintenance. Schools like SD Negeri 9 Matekko and SD Negeri 11 Dangerakko creatively use recycled materials like gallons for planting herbs and vegetables. However, others, such as SD Negeri 8 Salobulo, have poorly maintained gardens and are overgrown with weeds. Muhlis, the principal of SD Negeri 28 Mancani, stated:

"Our garden includes medicinal plants and fruit trees, but we need to involve students more in maintaining it."

Efforts to create literacy-rich environments are evident, with most schools displaying motivational posters and educational materials throughout their premises. However, SD Negeri 37 Mawa lacks such displays, which could enhance the learning atmosphere. Halima Sadiyah highlighted:

"Posters and student-made materials are important in creating a literacy-friendly environment, and we ensure they are updated regularly in our school."

While schools in Palopo City demonstrate a strong commitment to literacy program infrastructure, there are significant resource availability and quality gaps. These findings underline the need for targeted support to ensure all schools have access to adequate facilities and can maintain them effectively.

Strategies for Literacy Program Implementation

Elementary schools in Palopo City employ various strategies to support the implementation of literacy programs, focusing on enhancing teacher capacity, developing a literacy-rich environment, fostering social-emotional growth, and strengthening the academic atmosphere. These strategies aim to address readiness gaps and ensure literacy initiatives' sustainability.

Enhancing Educator Capacity is a critical strategy for effective literacy program implementation. Schools have participated in various training sessions, workshops, and mentoring programs. For example, SD Negeri 11 Dangerakko conducted two workshops to address specific needs. Jeni Kendek, the school's principal, shared:

"We organized a workshop on creating a text-rich environment and another on designing problem-based learning based on literacy levels. These were essential given our low literacy scores."

However, while all schools have participated in literacy-related socialization programs, only some have engaged in structured workshops or received adequate mentoring. As shown in Table 2, not all schools have benefited equally from these capacity-building activities.

Table 2. Schools Participating in Literacy Workshops

School Name	Participated in Workshops	Mentoring Received
SD Negeri Dangerakko	✓	✓
SD Negeri 29 Songka	✓	✓
SD Negeri 8 Salobulo	X	✓
SD Negeri 37 Mawa	X	X

Developing a Literacy-Rich Environment is another key strategy. Schools have created reading corners, maintained gardens, and displayed motivational posters in classrooms and hallways. Fitriani, the vice principal of SD Negeri 9 Matekko, noted:

"Teachers and students collaborate to design their reading corners, making them engaging and unique."

Observations reveal that all schools have established reading corners, but the quality of resources and maintenance varies. Additionally, efforts to maintain school gardens further enhance this strategy. For instance, Muhlis, the principal of SD Negeri 28 Mancani, stated:

"Our garden is a collaborative effort where students help plant and maintain herbs and vegetables."

However, some schools, like SD Negeri 8 Salobulo, still struggle with poorly maintained gardens. Fostering social-emotional growth has been a priority for schools to create a supportive atmosphere for literacy programs. Collaborative activities have been instrumental, such as joint student-teacher projects and shared responsibilities in maintaining facilities. For example, Jumrany, the principal of SD Negeri 36 Latuppa, explained:

"We involve students in creating learning materials and maintaining the school garden, strengthening their sense of ownership and collaboration."

Diagram 1 illustrates the percentage of schools involving stakeholders like parents, teachers, and students in literacy initiatives.

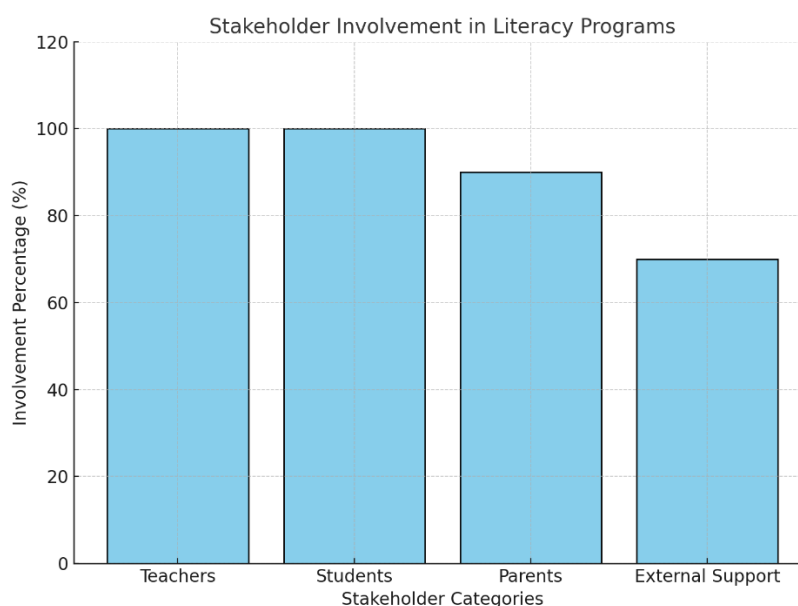


Diagram 1. Stakeholder Involvement in Literacy Programs

Strengthening the academic atmosphere in elementary schools across Palopo City involves introducing various literacy-focused programs. Schools have implemented weekly library visits, reading competitions, and the "Sami Saku" (*One Week, One Book*) program to foster a literacy culture. Chathrinie, the principal of SD Negeri 27 Lebang, stated:

"We encourage students to visit the library weekly and plan to launch the Sami Saku program to instil reading habits further."

Similarly, Halima Sadiah from SD Negeri 29 Songka shared:

"We conduct extracurricular activities focused on literacy and numeracy twice a month to enhance students' skills."

These efforts are designed to sustain students' interest in literacy activities and improve their academic outcomes. The study identified seven key strategies that schools employ to enhance literacy readiness. These include scheduling regular library visits, introducing the Sami Saku program, and conducting extracurricular activities focusing on literacy. Additionally, schools organize literacy week and reading competitions, create text-rich classrooms adorned with student-made materials, and collaborate with external stakeholders such as parents and students from the *Kampus Merdeka* program. Furthermore, schools actively involve all stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, and external supporters, in literacy activities to create a cohesive and supportive learning environment. These strategies demonstrate the proactive efforts of schools in Palopo City to enhance their literacy programs. However, the findings also reveal disparities in resource availability and program execution, underscoring the need for further support and standardization to ensure equitable access to literacy opportunities across all schools.

DISCUSSION

School Policies in Literacy Program Implementation

The findings underscore school policies' pivotal role in facilitating literacy program implementation under the Merdeka Curriculum in Palopo City's elementary schools. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Regulation No. 56/M/2022 provides a robust legal framework that mandates the integration of literacy initiatives as part of the curriculum. This regulation aims to enhance reading, writing, and numeracy skills, reflecting the government's commitment to post-pandemic educational recovery ([Kurniawan & Riyanti, 2024](#); [Rina & Natsir, 2024](#)). However, the varied implementation across schools reveals critical challenges, primarily resource limitations, that hinder uniform application.

Integrating the Minimum Competency Assessment (*Asesmen Kompetensi Minimum, AKM*) further emphasizes the importance of literacy as a cornerstone of educational progress. The AKM is an evaluative tool providing actionable feedback on students' literacy and numeracy levels. As SD Negeri 11 Dangerakko reported, the education report generated by AKM helps schools identify deficiencies and strategize improvements. However, the persistent low literacy scores in schools like SD Negeri 36 Latuppa highlight the need for targeted interventions and continuous support to bridge the gaps in student performance ([Fien et al., 2021](#); [Gonzales & Tejero Hughes, 2021](#); [Tavip et al., 2024](#)).

While the legal framework establishes a foundation for literacy programs, developing and implementing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are critical for operationalizing these policies. The study revealed significant disparities in the availability and quality of SOPs across schools. Some schools have comprehensive SOPs tailored to their unique needs, while others are still drafting them. This variability impacts the consistency and effectiveness of literacy program implementation ([Gulyanto et al., 2024](#); [R. Putri et al., 2023](#); [Syofyan et al., 2024](#)). For instance, SD Negeri 29 Songka demonstrates alignment between its SOPs and literacy activities, as evidenced by its structured 15-minute reading sessions incorporating moral and national values. In contrast, SD Negeri 37 Mawa acknowledges that its SOPs are not fully operationalized, limiting the program's effectiveness.

These findings align with broader educational theories emphasizing the importance of policy alignment with practice ([Loughlin et al., 2021](#); [Lundmark et al., 2021](#)). Effective literacy programs

require a strong policy foundation and the capacity to adapt these policies to local contexts ([Fien et al., 2021](#); [Sørensen et al., 2021](#)). Schools with tailored SOPs and proactive initiatives, such as SD Negeri 11 Dangerakko's Literacy Week, showcase the potential of localized strategies in addressing literacy challenges. However, the variability in SOP development and implementation highlights the need for capacity-building initiatives that support schools in creating and operationalizing effective guidelines ([Aung & Aye, 2024](#); [Mufatih et al., 2024](#)).

The findings also suggest that while regulatory mandates like the Merdeka Curriculum and AKM provide a necessary framework, their success depends heavily on schools' effective implementation of these policies. Resource constraints, such as insufficient facilities and limited teacher training, further exacerbate these challenges. These barriers call for enhanced support from the government and other stakeholders, including targeted funding, infrastructure development, and professional development opportunities for educators ([Hidayah et al., 2025](#); [Julaen & Deddy Ramdhani, 2024](#); [Kiki Fatmawati, 2024](#); [Saleh et al., 2024](#)).

Infrastructure and Resources for Literacy Programs

Infrastructure and resources are fundamental to the successful implementation of literacy programs in elementary schools ([Fadillah & Istikomah, 2021](#); [Jamilah et al., 2023](#); [Marmoah & Poerwanti, Suharno, 2022](#)). The findings highlight key components such as libraries, reading corners, school clinics, canteens, and school gardens as essential for fostering literacy-rich environments. However, significant disparities in their availability and quality across schools in Palopo City point to the challenges of achieving uniform implementation.

Libraries are pivotal spaces for promoting literacy, yet their conditions vary widely. While some schools provide comfortable and well-equipped libraries, others lack basic facilities such as adequate seating or multimedia tools. This inconsistency underscores the need for targeted investments to ensure all students access conducive learning environments ([Fadillah & Istikomah, 2021](#); [Krishnaiah et al., 2024](#)). Similarly, while present in every classroom, reading corners exhibit varied levels of quality. Schools with well-maintained and diverse book collections demonstrate better utilization of these resources, whereas others with limited materials and poor organization struggle to fully engage students ([Ewing & Cooper, 2021](#); [Trinter & Hughes, 2021](#)).

The role of school clinics (UKS) in supporting literacy programs lies in their ability to create a healthy learning environment. Although all schools have basic first-aid kits, the absence of advanced tools such as thermometers and blood pressure monitors limits their functionality. Schools with partnerships with local health professionals serve as examples of how collaboration can enhance the quality of services provided to students ([Coburn et al., 2021](#); [Geesa et al., 2022](#); [Hertz & Barrios, 2021](#)).

Canteens represent an underutilized space for promoting literacy. While most schools ensure healthy food options, the absence of literacy-supportive features such as books or posters limits their potential as spaces for learning. This gap highlights an opportunity to integrate literacy into everyday school routines, encouraging a more holistic approach to education ([Elmer et al., 2021](#); [Roberts & Rochester, 2021](#)).

School gardens also contribute to literacy-rich environments by fostering experiential learning. Well-maintained gardens in some schools demonstrate their potential to support literacy and environmental awareness ([Anggraini et al., 2024](#); [Daskolia & Chouliara, 2024](#); [Gallagher-Mackay & Corso, 2024](#)). However, the lack of consistent maintenance in other schools reflects the need for structured programs that involve both students and teachers in garden activities ([Casmata et al., 2023](#); [Lohr et al., 2022](#)). Efforts to create literacy-rich environments through motivational posters and educational materials are evident in most schools, further enhancing the atmosphere for learning. However, the absence of such features in a few schools points to inconsistencies in implementation that need to be addressed ([Mulyani, 2022](#); [Oktaviani & Kulsum, 2023](#)).

The disparities in infrastructure and resources highlight the challenges schools face in achieving equitable literacy outcomes. While some schools demonstrate commendable practices, others require significant support to overcome resource constraints. Addressing these gaps through targeted interventions, government support, and community collaboration will be crucial to ensuring that all schools can provide the infrastructure needed to sustain successful literacy programs ([Fien et al., 2021](#); [Ika Sari et al., 2024](#); [Tavip et al., 2024](#)).

Strategies for Literacy Program Implementation

The findings reveal a multifaceted approach employed by elementary schools in Palopo City to implement literacy programs effectively. These strategies—focused on enhancing educator capacity, creating literacy-rich environments, fostering social-emotional growth, and strengthening the academic atmosphere—highlight proactive efforts to address challenges in literacy readiness and sustain long-term program success. However, implementation and resource allocation disparities underscore the need for standardized practices and increased support ([Arifin, 2024](#); [Fien et al., 2021](#)).

Enhancing Educator Capacity is a cornerstone of successful literacy program implementation ([Lo, 2024](#); [Vilchez et al., 2021](#)). Training sessions, workshops, and mentoring are pivotal in equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills to deliver effective literacy instruction ([Casmaña et al., 2023](#); [Roberts & Rochester, 2021](#); [Tavip et al., 2024](#)). For example, SD Negeri 11 Dangerakko's targeted workshops on creating text-rich environments and designing problem-based learning illustrate the potential of tailored professional development initiatives. However, as shown in Table 2, not all schools have participated equally in such activities. The lack of mentoring and structured workshops in schools like SD Negeri 37 Mawa indicates an uneven distribution of capacity-building opportunities, limiting the potential for consistent program execution across all schools ([Casmaña et al., 2023](#); [Mufatih et al., 2024](#)).

Developing a Literacy-Rich Environment further supports the literacy program by providing students access to engaging spaces and resources ([Mulyani, 2022](#); [Oktaviani & Kulsum, 2023](#)). Reading corners, school gardens and motivational displays in classrooms and hallways contribute to this environment ([Casmaña et al., 2023](#); [Kartikasari & Nuryasana, 2022](#); [Oktaviani & Kulsum, 2023](#)). While all schools have established reading corners, the quality of these spaces varies, with some lacking diverse and engaging materials. Similarly, well-maintained school gardens serve as effective tools for experiential learning, but their condition is inconsistent across schools. This variation reflects the challenges of maintaining resource-intensive initiatives, particularly under-resourced settings ([Anggraini et al., 2024](#); [Berlian et al., 2022](#); [Nasrullah et al., 2024](#)).

Fostering Social-Emotional Growth has emerged as a critical strategy to create a supportive atmosphere for literacy programs ([D. F. Putri & Abdullah, 2024](#); [Vodă et al., 2022](#)). Activities that involve collaboration between students and teachers, such as maintaining gardens and creating learning materials, help build a sense of ownership and teamwork ([Anggraini et al., 2024](#); [Wulandari & Nawangsari, 2024](#)). The integration of parents and external stakeholders, as shown in Diagram 1, further strengthens the community's role in literacy initiatives. This collaborative approach aligns with educational theories emphasizing the importance of a supportive social-emotional environment in enhancing learning outcomes ([Andrei, 2023](#); [Loughlin et al., 2021](#); [Wulandari & Nawangsari, 2024](#)).

Strengthening the Academic Atmosphere involves introducing literacy-focused programs such as weekly library visits, reading competitions, and the Sami Saku program. These initiatives aim to sustain students' interest in literacy while improving academic performance. Schools that implement diverse programs, such as SD Negeri 29 Songka's extracurricular activities and SD Negeri 27 Lebang's weekly library visits, demonstrate innovative practices in fostering literacy. However, the extent of program implementation varies, with some schools lacking the resources or capacity to introduce such activities consistently ([Jamilah et al., 2023](#); [Marmoah & Poerwanti, Suharno, 2022](#); [Oktaviani & Kulsum, 2023](#)).

The study identified seven key strategies that reflect the proactive efforts of schools to enhance literacy readiness, including organizing regular library visits, implementing literacy-focused extracurricular activities, and creating text-rich environments. These initiatives highlight the schools' commitment to fostering a culture of literacy through diverse and collaborative approaches (Lo, 2024; Vodă et al., 2022). However, the findings also reveal significant disparities in program execution, with some schools demonstrating advanced practices while others face challenges related to limited resources and insufficient capacity-building opportunities.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the challenges and efforts in implementing literacy programs in elementary schools across Palopo City, focusing on school policies, infrastructure, and strategies. While the legal framework under Regulation No. 56/M/2022 mandates literacy integration in the Merdeka Curriculum, its implementation varies due to resource limitations. Disparities in infrastructure, such as libraries, reading corners, and school gardens, as well as inadequate multimedia tools and diverse reading

materials, hinder program effectiveness. Additionally, while some schools have developed comprehensive Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and engaged in capacity-building activities, others lag in accessing structured workshops and mentoring, reflecting uneven program execution. To address these gaps, schools must standardize policies, enhance resource allocation, and expand access to professional development opportunities. Investments in infrastructure, such as multimedia tools and diverse reading resources, alongside fostering community collaboration, can support consistent literacy program implementation. These efforts will ensure equitable access to literacy initiatives and improve educational outcomes, creating a strong foundation for student learning and development.

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